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COMIX PLUGOLA

The latest parody from Nice Day Comix, 911 Park St. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504-6241 is HARRIED WITH . . .UH . . . 18 YEAR -OLDS. $1 pp. Age statement with order.

JIM RYAN ON COMIX IMPACT

I think comix deserve more credit than they've gotten over the years, credit for being a part of lives in little towns no one's heard of. I think back to my crowd in Elmira, N. Y. back around 1969-1975. By then, the scene in the Bay Area was already pretty lost in many ways. But it didn't matter to us.The Comix had just that moment reached Elmira. We didn't focus on comix, but there'd always be comix in somebody's apartment. Nobody was a hippie, just a bit cool, and we'd get high, drink wine, listen to sounds and read comix. We loved 'em. We could be kids again but not have our minds insulted by the content. We'd all read them; one or two of us could be called small-time collectors, having a hundred or so comix. And I went on to get *into* comix. I'd sit there for hours, poring over the comix like they were maps, studying every detail. We were wild but decent, didn't harm anybody. None of us *got off* on the sex in the boox. We just thought it was hysterically funny, and to this day there are all kinds of guys I know from back then who occasionally come up with a ***Jack shit*** or ***My thunder, what a whopper!*** straight out of Wilson. Wilson was universally regarded as superior to Crumb or Shelton, or Proust for that matter. I suppose this reflected our working class origins. Any any rate, all the comix were thought to be cool, but Wilson was IT. Elmira was anything but a hip town, and I'm pretty sure people from many towns could tell you a similar story. So that's the follow-up to my remarks, just man to man, about what comix really meant to a lot of people that nobody ever knew about--people who would never think of subscribing to a comix newsletter, for whom the comix were the comix, period.

4-4-90

WIMMEN'S COMIX 16 will be about MEN and can we take it? Is sisterhood really powerful? You wouldn't know it from looking at contemporary politics or the corporate rosters. The movies and tv are more sexist than ever and the ad world, well, my readers are referred to the excellent essay by Gloria Steinum in the revived adless MS. Gloria reveals the male hands around the throat of the body politic and don't be surprised to find them oil and nicotine stained. $2.50

first time he sped up to catch some crooks, but I'm nostalgic about that helmet the way I am about things like Wonder Woman's mental radio and Captain Midnight's decoder ring. You love things the way you knew them when you grew up. THE HUMAN TORCH would be a more interesting TV-series character. Hey, the pyros would go apeshit over him, huh?

ow about that rid dous costume on 2 old Flash? Look at those tits. Is that really Dolly Parton hiding in there? Flash is just the latest incarnation of Mercury. I liked the comic in the forties. Flash had an office full of people who worked with him and was done in the spirit of Jack Kirby's newsboys and boy commandoes. I realize his costume had to be updated, because the little helmet he wore would fall up the

GEERDES' WORLD

I started COMIX WORLD to free myself. That was the main reason. A writer has a difficult time saying what he wants to say and when he has to ask an editor or publisher for permission to say it nine times out of ten he winds up saying what he never intended to say in the first place. Publications, be they tabloids or magazines, have built-in viewpoints. Call it whatever you please. Editorial policy. Slant. The editors have to lick the boots of the publisher who has to lick the boots of his major advertisers which means hype city. *You write for us, you write what we want you to write the way we want you to write it. We want those i's dotted and those t's crossed and no funny business.*

Now there is a certain degree of freedom for the writer in some publications, but even big shots like Herb Caen only get so many column inches in which to say whatever it is that want to say. The party line is always there beneath the surface. You want to get rid of those chains, you have to pay the printer and publish your own.

I don't want you to think I think my opinion is anymore important than yours. I don't think that. I like to see a culture where you have your say and I have mine and we can read each other and fight it out with our pens or word processors. I do want you to know that I am not going to take your word for anything. If I am interested in a subject, I research it and keep a file of dates, chapters, verses, etc., which I am always ready to use to back up what I have to say. I often write about comic books and I am always disgusted with the poor research I find in most of the *reference* books on the subject. I want footnotes, references, and accuracy, and I seldom find it. *A history of comics that doesn't even have a bibliography isn't worth reading.* The reader can't trust that history, however famous the author may be. I want to know where the information came from. If it came from an interview, I want to know when that interview was conducted and whether a transcript is available. If the writer is just rewriting Steranko or Becker or Waugh or Robinson, I want to know that so I can compare his book with theirs to see whether he has any new insight to offer.

In comics, artists have suddenly become authorities, and they are definitely not authorities on the history of the medium however many pages of superheroes they pencil a month. There are *some* artists who are well read in the field, but being an artist and being an historian are radically different preoccupations. I've listened to artists talk on panels at conventions and heard them make up stuff a mile a minute. I don't want to come down too hard on these egotistic bores, because there are a lot of books to read and they spend most of their time chained to the drawing board, but I would suggest they practice a bit of restraint when they don't have the answers and give some space on their panel to someone who has got them. I still think panels ought to fulfill an educational function, though I realize at most conventions they have become nothing more than promos for the product where the artist faithfully represents his company, defending it against any possibility of legitimate criticism.

When I started COMICS WORLD in 1973, I had been writing a column about comix for various underground newspapers and fanzines. I did a series on underground companies and artists for the Los Angeles FREE PRESS and in the process I learned a great deal about the whole comix trip. I had a number of good teachers ranging from Roger Brand, Jaxon, Gary Arlington, Simon Deitch, Harvey Kurtzman, Will Eisner, people who knew their subject. Brand had an extensive library and when he talked about comic art he always referred to one or more of his books, taking it off the shelf to show me the passage. Like Jaxon, he was an artist/historian and I knew I could trust what he said. Other underground artists I met at that time often knew very little about comics in general or underground comix in particular. Some admitted it, but others tried to fake it for ego's sake. Gradually, COMIX WORLD found its niche and its purpose which was to inform not only the readers who were curious about the subject but the artists themselves. They knew their own immediate scene, but there were small cliques of artists all over the world at that time and many identified with the concept of underground comix. COMIX WORLD served as a catalyst for these diverse groups. This same phenomenon occurred a decade later when many of us were doing the minicomix or newaves. Again, small groups of artists in various towns and cities began to connect with one another through my newsletter and subsequent publications like Small Press Explosion, Comix Fanola, Comix F/X, ad infinitum. In any generation, I would say there are X number of people who want to do comix. Whether or not they realize their ambition depends upon their connecting with people of like mind. When I was a kid in Nebraska, I did my own little comic strip at school, but there was no place to send it. There was no underground, no newave, and I never saw a fanzine until the early sixties when I chanced on some of them in a huckster room at a science fiction convention in some hotel in San Francisco.

It was a little scary starting my own newsletter. I had no idea who, if anyone, would buy it. I typed it on a small portable Smith Corona, the typewriter that got me through several college degrees. I put an ad in Alan Light's BUYERS' GUIDE and put copies around in the local comic and science-fiction stores. I went to conventions and left it there for people to find. I had worked on the first Underground Comix Convention with the guys from the Berkeley Comic Art Shop and I was heavily into promotion at that time. I had learned a lot of ways to get attention while writing for the Berkeley BARB and the Los Angeles FREE PRESS.

The newsletter was successful and nearly all of the Bay Area artists gave

me their cooperation. They did logos in exchange for subscriptions and passed the word around. But I had a ways to go to free myself as a writer, because I was basically doing hype for underground comic companies, not writing what I wanted to write. Not that I knew what that was, but it existed for me as a vague dissatisfaction. What did I get out of it all? I wasn't getting paid, so I was just free publicity. I had a certain amount of notoriety, but as what? I was accused of being an egotist because I put my name on everything I did, but I had learned very early in the comics game that the only way to protect something was to have my name on it. Even with my name on my logo, I wasn't able to stop a New York company from ripping it off. I had published CW for ten years and a company decided to come out with a magazine with my logo on it! I got them to change the name of the magazine, but they still own the federal copyright on the title. I had always understood that publication was copyright and I knew very few people in underground comics went through the process of filing. After that experience, I filed for COMIX WAVE and started using that. Today, I would advise any of you readers who intend to do a publication over a long period of time to file the papers. The snapper is you can't copyright an idea or a title. You have to copyright what you do as a trademark with a graphic symbol. None of us were into that business trip in the sixties. Crumb wasn't, so when the sharpies in New York noticed this, they ripped off his images and sold them on posters and glasses. a few years later he filed suit and some money changed hands, but Crumb got very little of it.

My newsletter is seventeen years old this October and I feel more comfortable with it now that I have reclaimed the space. For awhile there it looked like I was going to become nothing but a hype sheet with no room for any of my pet research projects, but I fought the impulse and took it back. My portable typewriter has gone the way and a friend is using the Selectric and the Canon is on a shelf and COMIX WAVE is typeset by a Macintosh SE-20 these days. The orientation of the letter has shifted, but not radically. I still keep up with the few underground comix that are published and I plug whatever else people send me. As for the editorial content, it might be anything. I write about anything that interests me. I print some opinions and letters if they are not too wordy, but the space is mine, and I say whatever I feel like saying at the moment.

Over the years I have been pressured to do this or that, but I seldom gave in to the pressure. Some people like reviews. I never read them. I don't even write what I would think of as a review though I talk about a lot of comic books and movies and assorted media. I mention zines that are sent to me and let my readers buy them or not as they see fit. I am not an arbiter of taste or a trendsetter. If I like something, I'll say so, but that doesn't mean anything. My taste is not yours. If I hate something, I'll say that, too. Again, it don't mean shit, as Mr. Natural would comment. I used to get letters asking me to do more interviews. Why? The form doesn't interest me. I have interviewed most of the artists who interest me at one time or another and all that rap is in my back issues for anyone who wants to read it. I see a lot of people being interviewed these days when they have done very little to make them worth interviewing. To me, it's not enough for someone to scribble off an eight page minicomic, then run around acting like a fucking celebrity and giving out interviews. Give me a break! Pay your dues and get some work under your belt and make a rep, then maybe you'll be worth discussing, but until then, show a little class. I have egotistical letters in my files from people who haven't even done a full length story yet.

My newsletter is a single sheet and I don't have the space for long-winded interviews even if I had the patience to do them. Every zine I look at these days tends to have interviews and reviews. Why should I print these things? I don't even run much preview art these days. I used to run it because no one else was doing it and that was the only way anyone got to see a sampling of the underground and newave art styles if they did not happen to have a head or comic shop in their community, but these days I see the art promoted everywhere I look so I ask myself why should I run it? Magazines and tabloids have the space to spare for that kind of free advertising. I haven't. I'm still your basic hobbyist. I could have expanded into a mag or a tab long ago, but I chose to do something else with my time. Those who have turned their comics hobby into a business have their rewards and their punishments. I appreciate their efforts and I contribute when I'm asked, but I am not sorry I chose to limit the range of COMIX WAVE.

People still do not write much about underground and newave comix. I am amazed at the amount of crapola I see in print about the factory comics from the East. Something like DEATH RATTLE or WEIRDO or BLAB comes out and it's hardly mentioned in CBG or COMIX SCENE. There is a Crumb page in Thomas Inge's COMICS AS CULTURE [University Press of Mississippi, 1990], but Underground comix is not even included in the index and this book contains a lot of overly familiar popular culture rap about Krazy Kat and Milt Caniff and EC. Joseph Witek analyzed the work of Jack Jackson [Jaxon], Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar in COMIX BOOKS AS HISTORY [University Press of Mississippi, 1989], but underground comix per se continue to be a clandestine subject, tolerated, for sure, but unlikely to be discussed on your afternoon talk show. Comics in general are like that, so taken for granted that the ordinary person would no more think of writing about them than about the morning cup of coffee.

COMIX WAVE moves the subject into the foreground and leaves other things in the background, a momentary reversal of reality, but one which pleases the writer and some of the readers.

-Clay Geerdes, 7/90

TEENAGED MUTANT HERO TURTLES? Yes, that's what they are called in England where the word Ninja is a no-no. Don't ask me why. I read about it in a local newspaper.

New minis from Tom Ferranti: THE FROZEN CEMENT EXPLOSION #12 and A LEG WITHOUT A BRAIN. 35¢ each pp. Say you saw them in CW and get a free *hand carved* rubber stamp! POB 114, Northridge, CA 91328-0114.

Doubleday has collected and released Larry Gonick's CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE. This material was done through Rip Off Press beginning in the mid-seventies.

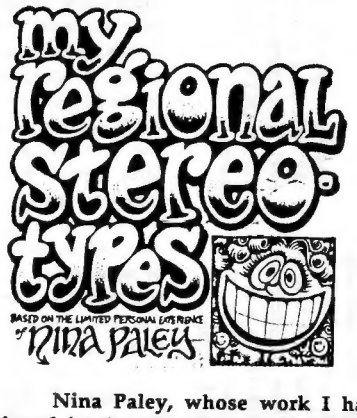
If I fail to say a lot about comix like Dave Sim's CEREBUS, it doesn't mean I don't like them, just that they are fondly familiar to me and I have begun to take them for granted. I am still amazed at the meticulous artwork in the CEREBUS series and if you have not read the stories, get thee to a comic book store and check them out. --Clay Geerdes.

Rip Off Press is publishing a collection of the work of painter R. Diggs. $2. If you can't find these comix where you live, you can order them directly from the company. POB 4686, Auburn, CA 95604. California residents should include 6.25 % sales tax and the postage and handling on each book is $1.25. I suspect you can send an SASE to Kathe Todd and get the latest ad.

EL VIBORA has put out a war special. The pages are all blood red with the white panels pasted up on them. Reminds me of Simon Deitch's THRILLING MURDER in which the only color was red and there was some kind of bloodshed on every page. $8 from J. N. Berengueuer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain.

REAL SCREAM COMICS #18 is $2.50 pp from Mike Culpepper, 808 Stanley Street, Nelson, B. C. Canada V1L 1N7. DZ. I like to see comics like this one which was inspired by REAL SCREEN COMICS, a funny animal book which headlined two of my favorite cartoon characters, Fauntleroy Fox and Crawford Crow. Fox was kind of a simple character and he was always taken for a sucker by the hip antics of Crow, but in the end Fox usually won the game. Comics were like that in the forties. Today the good guys are always depicted as losers.

Joshua Quagmire's Cutey Bunny lives on at the Rip Off Press where she is featured in a satirical book called UNCLE JOE'S COMMIE BOOK. Uncle Joe would be the drunken asshole who cost a lot of people their careers during the witch hunts of the House Un-American Activities Committee in the early fifties. Tricky Dick Nixon was a member of that corrupt committee, so this ought to be a funny funny book. $2.



Nina Paley, whose work I have enjoyed in the SANTA CRUZ COMIC NEWS, has published a mini-comic. It's called MY REGIONAL STEREOTYPES. $L.45 from POB 412, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. I've reprinted her Berkeley stereotype and have to say I have never seen anyone who looks like this around here, but there are a few women with Easter egg dyed hair. I think Berkeley is a hard place to stereotype in terms of fashion because people around here tend to dress *down* most of the time and everyone I know wears whatever they feel like wearing no matter where they are going. Last time I went to the ballet, most of the people there were wearing casual clothes.

Roberta Gregory has a mini-comic out. It's SHEEP SHOTS, SHEEP TRICKS, and SHEEP THRILLS. 50¢/stamp from her at Box 27438, Seattle, WA 98125. I published a SHEEP THRILLS minicomic in 1984, but lots of titles get duplicated these days as the ideas continue to circulate.

Always send an age statement when you order comix these days, because many of them are Adults Only. It's been my experience over the years that things that say Adults Only are usually of more interest to eight-year-olds than to adults, but that is the way of our world.